



**Workshop on the Harmonisation of Scientific Observers (WS2024-OBS)**

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# Establishment of a framework for scientific observation of SIOFA fisheries

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<b>Abstract</b>	
<p>The project “SEC2022-OBS1: Establish a framework for scientific observation of SIOFA fisheries” aims to ensure that scientific observers working in SIOFA fisheries operate using a consistent set of standards for observation and measurement.</p> <p>This report is structured to address the five objectives of the project in a hierarchical sequence that covers the high-level objectives for observer coverage as well as detailed data collection forms and operational requirements for an observer scheme.</p> <p>A draft CMM, based on the existing SIOFA CMM 02, provides a policy-level framework for a SIOFA Scientific Observer Scheme, and includes a ‘code of conduct’ for an observer scheme, clarification of the roles and responsibilities of observers and the categories of data that should be collected by observers. We suggest that the detailed sampling mechanisms and requirements should be specified through delegated responsibilities i.e. ‘as agreed by the Scientific Committee’ to allow greater flexibility in setting and revising scientific sampling priorities.</p> <p>The collection of consistent and high-quality scientific data by scientific observers in SIOFA fisheries should be based on standardised data collection processes. Based on feedback from CCPs, and experience in translating the requirements in CMMs into operational observer data collection programs, we have provided a set of fishery-specific Observer Logbooks in Excel workbooks, an instruction manual that describes how each field in the respective Logbook forms should be completed and a draft for an Observer Cruise report.</p>	

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To provide assurance that observer data collected in SIOFA fisheries are fit for purpose we have outlined a set of minimum standards for CCP observer programmes that encompass the complete observer operation and data life cycle and include specific requirements of observer program infrastructure, training and performance. Metrics for the review of both the structural implementation of, and the outcomes from, observer programmes are also provided.

Electronic Monitoring systems that provide data on timing and location of fishing operations and counts of individual fish landed in line fisheries could be introduced in SIOFA and would help to optimise the work of observers and allow more time for biological and ecosystem-related data collection.

Recommendations for future work are divided into aspects that are 'structural', insofar as they are policy decisions on the obligations of CCPs for data reporting in SIOFA, and 'scientific', where they related to the detailed description of how those data reporting obligations are met.

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## Recommendations

It is apparent that SIOFA has in place many of the elements required for an operational observer scheme that could be implemented across all fisheries. The harmonisation of these elements would benefit from a clear articulation from SIOFA of the observer coverage levels and data collection requirements in each fishery. Obtaining high-quality and comparable data, collected by scientific observers is essential to understanding the impacts of fishing on key stocks and associated ecosystems. Collection of these data are facilitated by having a standard set of observer logbooks, with clear instructions for how they should be completed, alongside clear guidance to ensure that CCP observer programmes operate according to a common set of standards and performance metrics.

In delivering this project report we have sought to provide the required elements outlined above and to identify aspects of future work required that would contribute to the further harmonisation across fisheries related data collection in SIOFA. The future work outlined can be divided into aspects that are 'structural', i.e. that are policy decisions on the obligations of CCPs for data reporting in SIOFA, and 'scientific', i.e. the detailed description of how those data reporting obligations should be met. Accordingly, we have identified the following aspects of potential future work:

### *Structural*

- Specification of the mandatory data requirements from SIOFA fisheries in order to meet the objectives of Article XX of the SIOFA Agreement and whether these data should be provided by vessels or by scientific observers.
- Specification of the definition of observer coverage and required levels of coverage in all SIOFA fisheries.
- Agreement on a CMM that creates the policy-level framework for a harmonised observer scheme in SIOFA.
- Develop vessel data reporting Manual for SIOFA fisheries that can be used by all Observers in SIOFA fisheries.

### *Scientific*

- Review and implement observer data collection using a standard set of Observer Logbooks and instructions in SIOFA fisheries.
- Agree data entry processing and quality assurance metrics to provide feedback to CCPs on data quality and performance.
- Agree detailed biological sampling requirements for primary and secondary species in all SIOFA fisheries.
- Develop an Observer Manual that describes the detailed methods and processes that can be used by all Observers in SIOFA fisheries.